

# Constitutional Amendment Would Protect Collective Bargaining

UFCW 951 joined the Protect Our Jobs coalition in collecting enough signatures from registered voters to put an amendment to the state constitution on the ballot in November that would protect workers' collective bargaining rights.

See page three to learn more about the effort that would ensure that all Michigan workers have the right to negotiate a fair and just contract with their employer.



# The Voice of 951

Spring 2012

## Workers Secure UFCW 951 Representation, Ratify First Contracts

During May, over 1,200 workers ended their quest for UFCW 951 representation as Valley City Linen and JBS workers ratified their first union contracts.

"These contract ratifications truly bring the workers' union organizing drives to successful conclusions," John Cakmakci, UFCW 951's secretary/treasurer and organizing director, said. "It's a victory when workers elect union representation in the vote conducted by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), but they don't become union members until that first contract is ratified, which can be a real battle."

Employers often continue their anti-union campaign following the union vote, adding delaying contract bargaining to their union-busting tactics.

"A study found that only one-seventh of organizing drives where an election petition was filed with the NLRB managed to reach a first contract within a year of the representation election," Cakmakci said. "By ratifying contracts within a year of electing UFCW 951 representation, the workers at Valley City Linen and JBS really defied the odds. These workers have a great deal to be proud of; they stood strong and united. It was a privilege to help them achieve their goal of union membership."



Valley City Linen is a commercial laundry located in Grand Rapids employing approximately 120

UFCW 951 members.

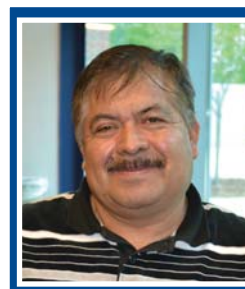
The workers contacted UFCW 951 in March 2011 to assist them in improving their working conditions through union representation.

"When company officials refused to address safety issues, mistreatment from management, and lack of wage increases, Valley City Linen workers decided it was time to unionize," Cakmakci said. "They endured a fierce union busting campaign, both before and after the union vote, but stood strong and united in their support of the union and today are enjoying the benefits of a union contract."

The one-year agreement provides a solid foundation upon which the union intends to build in future negotiations, and includes wage bonuses for all full-time employees, access to a grievance procedure, and union representation at the plant.

**"The union buster pushed everyone to vote no on the contract. But in the end, since it's a secret ballot, people could vote how they wanted. People saw how things have gotten better since the union representation vote and saw how the union helped workers who had been unjustly fired get their jobs back. That gave people a lot of confidence in the union and they wanted to vote yes on the contract."**

Teresa Velasco, 13-year Valley City Linen employee



**"Once I learned what the union was all about, I knew we needed one at Valley City Linen. Even though the plant management was against it the whole time, and the company made contract negotiations very difficult, the workers were able to come together to make a change. People are really looking forward to the respect that comes with a union contract and putting an end to all the favoritism."**

Antonio Beltran, 5-year Valley City Linen employee



**"The union's been great. Negotiations took place in three languages (English, Spanish, and Burmese). There were obstacles, but they brought the bargaining committee together. We respected each other's opinions and fought for what was important to one group even if others may have thought it trivial. We were all in it together. I think the contract will bring everyone's moral up."**

Troy Schlotterback, 4-Year JBS employee

Approximately 1,200 UFCW 951 members work at JBS, a slaughterhouse and production facility in Plainwell.



In July 2011, the workers sought UFCW 951's assistance in unionizing their workplace.

"From day one, there has been tremendous support for the union among JBS workers," Cakmakci said. "They view the union as the best option to improve their working conditions and bring a sense of fairness to the workplace."

The union was able to address many of the workers' primary concerns in the first contract, leading workers to overwhelmingly vote to accept the contract.

"The workers were pleased to see the significant wage increases, a reduction in their co-pay for health benefits, and additional paid time off, in addition to a system to address unjust terminations and unsafe working conditions," Cakmakci said. "Beyond that, they are happy that they can now go to work with the peace of mind and security that all the benefits and protections in their union contract are guaranteed; the company can't change its mind or play favorites."

**"Eighty percent of the plant hadn't had a raise in years. Now, with the contract, everyone's guaranteed a raise, not just the boss's buddies. The contract will level the playing field and provide better working conditions. People want to be treated with respect."**

Ron Tipken, 2-Year JBS employee



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## Leadership Message: What Does Labor Want?

# Labor's Goals Being Threatened



Marv Russow

### “What does labor want?”

*We want more schoolhouses and less jails; more books and less arsenals; more learning and less vice; more leisure and less greed; more justice and less revenge; in fact, more of the opportunities to cultivate our better natures.”*

Many of you probably have heard that quote before. Some of you may know that it was made by Samuel Gompers, the labor leader who founded the American Federation of Labor (AFL). But, if you are like me, you are always surprised when you remember that he made that statement in 1893. It has been over 100 years, but labor still wants and fights for the same

things, not just for ourselves, but for everyone.

Unions want all workers to receive fair pay; quality, affordable health insurance; and be able to enjoy a secure retirement. We want all our children to go to good schools and play in safe neighborhoods.

Simply put, labor wants people to have the opportunity to live better lives. This seems like a goal that everyone would support; unfortunately, they do not.

Instead of working with labor to lift the entire country up, there is a movement aimed at destroying the American middle class so a small group of ultra wealthy billionaires and their corporate interests can increase their riches. They believe everyone else needs to get by on less so they can have more, and have a plan to make their desire a reality.

It isn't enough for these people to own multiple companies, mansions, cars, jets, yachts, and other luxury items, they want to own our government as well. They know that controlling the government will enable them to change the laws to work in their

favor, at everyone else's expense.

We are already seeing millions of dollars pouring into the campaigns of Mitt Romney and other anti-worker candidates.

Here's just one example. Billionaire Sheldon Adelson recently donated \$10 million of his personal fortune to support Mitt Romney's campaign, and that's just the beginning. Adelson said he will donate as much as \$100 million to defeat Barack Obama.

This isn't the way our country should work. Elections shouldn't be bought by one, or even several, extraordinarily wealthy men.

We may not be able to stop these donations, but we can stop a few wealthy guys from owning our government by exercising our right to vote. These individuals may have billions of dollars, but they only have one vote. We, on the other hand, have millions of votes.

If you are not registered to vote, get registered. Urge your family and friends to do the same. We need to make sure everyone gets registered to vote so we can stop a few billionaires from buying our government to increase their riches.

## Lobby Day 2012: Members Take Workers' Issues to the State Capitol



Janet Breecher, Kroger New Market #738, with Rep. Jim Stamas' (R-Midland) staff member.

Over 100 UFCW members descended upon the state capitol in March for UFCW Michigan's sixth annual Lobby Day.

Armed with information on several of the over 80 anti-worker bills passed by or pending in the Republican-controlled state legislature, members explained to their legislators how their actions negatively impact them. Members also asked their elected officials to support amending the state constitution to protect the right of all workers to bargain collectively with their employers.

“There has been nothing short of a systematic attack on the middle class here in Lansing...

They want to drive down your wages and make you pay more for health care,” Rep. Jon Switalski (D-Warren), said. “The ballot initiative will take your inherent right to collective bargaining and put it in the constitution. That way, no matter who sits here, your rights will be protected by the constitution. With the Republicans in control, you need to put it in the constitution; if you don't, it [collective bargaining] will go away.”

Members secured the support of several legislators for their efforts to stop the attack on workers and protect the right to collectively bargain.

“I talked to Virgil Smith (D-Detroit) about right-to-work and other legislation that is being implemented in Michigan. They are trying to do to us what they did in Wisconsin,” Marvin Garland, from Meijer #231, said. “He said he would support our position. I told him if he didn't, I would be back with a recall petition.”

UFCW 951 appreciates the efforts of the members who made Lobby Day a success.

“Thank you for coming here

today and helping fight the war on the middle class,” John Cakmakci, UFCW 951's secretary/treasurer, said. “I've been a labor negotiator for the last 26 years, and I can tell you that collective bargaining is the only way to redistribute wealth in this country, and the Republicans are trying to take that away from us.”

“Now, more than ever, workers need the right to protect wages and benefits through collective bargaining,” Cakmakci. “Lobby Day is a great opportunity for members to let their representatives know how they are affected by their anti-worker legislation.”



Chester Ward, Kroger #852, lobbies Rep. Barb Byrum (D-Onondaga).



## Workers Elect UFCW 951 Representation



Pearson Foods workers celebrate after learning the vote in the union representation election was for UFCW 951.

Workers at Pearson Foods, a fresh-cut food processing facility in Grand Rapids, voted for UFCW 951 representation on June 1.

“UFCW 951 representation means a better future for myself and my family. I joined the union organizing committee because I saw my fellow workers being mistreated,” José Alfredo Jimenez, said. “I want to see change here. We work hard and we just want to be treated fairly. We were ignored before; now we will have a voice.”

The election ended the 160 workers' four-month campaign for union representation, which began after they grew tired of poor treatment at the workplace.

“Having UFCW 951 represent us means more protections on the job. I'll have more rights as a worker,” Mario Thomas said. “I'm so happy for my co-workers for voting UFCW 951 yes.”

The workers withstood a union busting campaign by their employer, resulting in charges being filed against the company for worker intimidation.

“The company fought the workers' unionizing efforts, but they stood strong and united in their effort to improve their working conditions by forming a union,” John Cakmakci, UFCW 951's secretary/treasurer and organizing director, said. “Now that the vote is over, we look forward to working with the company to negotiate a fair and just contract.”

## Rite Aid, Harding's Members Ratify Contracts



Sheri Conrad (left) and Jane Burke, from Rite Aid #4242, verify and count the ballots returned by Rite Aid members.

Rite Aid members overwhelmingly voted to accept a new 48-month contract on April 25.

The contract, which had the union's recommendation, includes wage increases for members with at least three months of seniority and maintains the high-quality health benefits, with the majority of the cost paid by the employer.

## Meijer Members: Do Not Delay, Open Your 401(k) Account Today

Changes in the Meijer Universal Benefits Agreement put a greater emphasis on the Meijer 401(k) Retirement Plan, making it important for eligible members to open their 401(k) accounts.

“Most members will qualify for a company contribution to their 401(k) without making any contribution of their own,” John Cakmakci, UFCW 951's secretary/treasurer, said. “As long as these members opened their account, Meijer will put two percent of their annual pay into the account at the end of the year.”

To receive the two percent company contribution, eligible members must have one year of service, be paid for at least 1,000 hours during the calendar year, and employed on December 31.

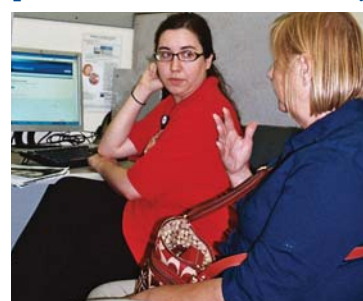
After one year of service, Meijer will also make a weekly contribution of \$0.20 for every dollar members put into their 401(k) account, on contributions of up to five percent of their pay.

UFCW 951 is holding meetings at each Meijer workplace to

“The current economic situation with Rite Aid definitely made bargaining challenging, but I believe we left the table with the best contract possible,” Marv Russow, UFCW 951's president, said. “By their support, it appears members agreed.”

Members at Harding's #356 in Hartford also overwhelmingly ratified a new three-year contract this spring. The new agreement meets the membership's main goals for the negotiations: maintenance of health benefits at affordable levels, wage increases, and continuation of pension benefit levels.

“The escalating cost of health care and pension funding made these very difficult negotiations,” Russow said. “It was a long, challenging process, but in the end we were able to meet the members' top bargaining goals.”



Brooke Heintz, Meijer #216, receives assistance enrolling in her 401(k) from UFCW 951 union representative Jean Cook.

assist members in opening their 401(k) accounts.

“I needed to sign up for my 401(k) and, with the help and encouragement of the union, I did,” Pat Peters, Meijer #216, said. “There is money available to me; it would be foolish not to take it.”

For assistance in opening your 401(k), contact your union representative, Meijer Retirement Services at 1.866.681.6116, or go to Your Benefit Resources (YBR) web site at

[www.resources.hewitt.com/meijer](http://www.resources.hewitt.com/meijer).



## Over Twice the Number of Required Signatures Collected

# Drive to Amend State Constitution to Protect Collective Bargaining Advances



The effort to amend the state constitution to include a provision that would protect workers' collective bargaining rights is quickly advancing.

workers are able to negotiate a fair contract with their employer. They understand that workers don't just negotiate for fair wages and benefits, but other im-

attempt some type of frivolous legal challenge to the petitions like they did with the petitions filed to repeal the emergency manager law," Russow said. "While we feel very confident about our petitions, Protect Our Jobs has attorneys ready to fight any challenge."

After the petitions are certified, a ballot proposal number will be assigned and the ballot wording established, determining whether a "yes" or "no" vote would amend the constitution.

"Now we need to focus on educating voters on the importance of protecting collective bargaining," Russow said. "Over the last two years, workers and the entire middle class have been under attack by Lansing politicians and corporate special interests who want to silence workers so corporations can prosper while working families suffer. Now more than ever, workers need the right to speak up to protect their wages, benefits, and voice, and that's what this effort is all about."

Since 2010, Lansing politicians have passed one anti-worker measure after another, weakening protections for workers and dismantling collective bargaining rights, none of which did anything to help put Michigan back to work.

UFCW 951 is part of Protect Our Jobs, a

**Protect Our Jobs**  
Our Work, Our Voice, Our Future

grassroots campaign fighting to protect the collective voices of Michigan's workers and strengthen the middle class, by adding an amendment to the state constitution protecting collective bargaining.

### The amendment would:

- Establish the people's rights to organize, to form, join or assist unions and to bargain collectively regarding their wages, hours and other conditions of employment.
- Prohibit employers from retaliating against employees for exercising those rights.
- Prohibit politicians from interfering with those rights, and protect current laws establishing minimum wages, hours and working conditions.
- Authorize the state to restrict or prohibit public employee strikes.
- Provide a needed counterweight to politicians and CEOs who care more about protecting their huge bonuses than doing what's right for middle class families.



UFCW 951 Steward Marge Eppes-VantHoff, Meijer #217, circulated petitions calling for the collective bargaining amendment to the state constitution.

**"Through collective bargaining, Michigan workers helped create the middle class. Now we need to protect our collective bargaining rights to help rebuild our economy. This campaign is about protecting Michigan's middle class. When the middle class is strong, workers have more money to spend to get our economy moving again."**

Marv Russow  
UFCW 951 President

In mid-June, the Protect Our Jobs coalition, sponsors of the amendment drive, delivered 684,286 signatures to the Secretary of State on petitions calling for the amendment. In order for the amendment to be placed before voters in November, the state required 322,609 valid voter signatures by July 9, 2012.

"To collect over twice the required number of signatures in just three months is a testament to the volunteers who worked so hard on this campaign and to the support of voters for this issue," Marv Russow, UFCW 951's president, said. "People, whether they are in a union or not, realize that everyone benefits when

important issues such as classroom size and safe patient care."

UFCW Michigan pledged to collect 15,000 signatures. On the day the petitions were turned in, 27,000 had been collected by the UFCW.

"I am so very proud of all the hard work done by the UFCW on this project," Russow said. "We were the first union to achieve its signature goal and one of only five to do so."

The petitions will now be certified by the Michigan Secretary of State Bureau of Elections to be formally added to the November ballot.

"We fully expect Republican opponents to the amendment to

[www.protectourjobs.com](http://www.protectourjobs.com)

"It's clear Lansing politicians are making a political power grab and trying to silence the collective voice of teachers, nurses, and firefighters," Russow said. "Collective bargaining rights give all workers a voice at the workplace. Through collective bargaining, Michigan workers helped

create the middle class. Now we need to protect our collective bargaining rights to help rebuild our economy. This campaign is about protecting Michigan's middle class. When the middle class is strong, workers have more money to spend to get our economy moving again."

## Members Help Collect Signatures in Support of Collective Bargaining Amendment



**"I live in a small, poor community. Surprisingly small business owners were very interested in signing the petition. They realize people having more money because of collective bargaining will help them."**

Heidi Lee, Meijer #217



**"We need to protect our collective bargaining rights to preserve the livelihoods of the middle class. The unions created the middle class. Without unions we won't have a middle class in the future."**

Tom Hafner, Meijer #50



**"With all the negative legislation being passed attacking workers and their right to negotiate with their employer, it's so important that we protect collective bargaining in the constitution. If we don't, they will take that right away from us."**

Kristie Noall, Meijer #50



**"I'm supporting this amendment and workers' right to be unionized because of job security. I don't want to see Michigan become a right-to-work-for less state."**

Marge Eppes-VantHof, Meijer #217

Protect  
**YOUR**  
Right to  
**VOTE**

**Your Vote is Your Voice. Get Registered. Be Heard. It's Your Right.**

## Show Your Union Pride & Win a Prize



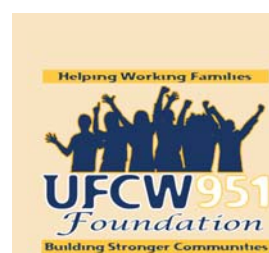
Ileen Mathis, Harding's #400.

We're proud of our union and want you to be, too!

That's why UFCW 951 recognizes members who wear their UFCW 951 buttons, badge holders, or pins (available from union representatives).

UFCW 951 officers and union representatives visit two units every month in each of the local's three regions and award the first member they see wearing one of these items a Union Pride prize package containing a t-shirt and a \$25 gift card.

Recent Union Pride winners include Marlene Breish, Meijer #260; Shannon Decker, Meijer #64; Colleen DelCampo, Meijer #237; Cindy Edalski, Meijer #65; Ileen Mathis, Harding's #400; Suzanne Meyers, Meijer #57; Sean Montero, Meijer #119; Stephanie Pope, Rite Aid #4424; Thomas Reed, Polly's #14 and Jackie Tyler, Meijer #251.



**628**  
New Members

**Thank You**  
for a  
**Successful Sign-Up Drive**

Thank you to everyone who participated in the recent UFCW 951 Foundation and Active Ballot Club (ABC) sign-up drive. Your hard work and generous donations mean these important groups will be able to continue their work on behalf of UFCW 951 members.



**1,182**  
New Members



To make sure all UFCW 951 members who are eligible voters can have their voices heard on election day, UFCW 951 is conducting a voter registration drive.

Many unregistered voters were mailed a packet from the UFCW International with the materials needed to conveniently register to vote. Union representatives are also registering members at their workplaces.

Members, their family and friends can also find voter registration materials at [www.ufcw951.com](http://www.ufcw951.com).

**Before You Can Vote, You Must be Registered**



# Local Holds Luncheons to Recognize Long Term Members

In recognition of the dedicated support of long-term members, UFCW 951 held luncheons in June for members with 25 years or more of UFCW 951 membership. Celebrations were held in Okemos, Grand Rapids, Frankenmuth and Madison Heights.

"These lunches gave the local the opportunity to personally thank the members whose commitment and participation on a variety of levels has made UFCW 951 a strong and vital union," John Cakmakci, UFCW 951 Secretary/Treasurer, said. "To be part of an organization for over 25 years is a significant accomplishment and one that we wanted to honor."

Participants received a special commemorative union jacket, a UFCW 951 service pin, and were entered into a door prize raffle. Guests in Grand Rapids were able to tour the Meijer Gardens following their lunch.

"This was a great day," Karen Brant, from Meijer #312, said. "It's nice to see members being recognized for their service."



Meijer #28 members Loreen Flynn (34 years), Christine Hoover (34 years UFCW 951), Judy Chargo (37 years), and Dorothy Shuck (35 years).



Debra Buchinger (33 years), Meijer #140, won a door prize at the Frankenmuth luncheon.



Rite Aid #1519 members Debra Mokma (34 years) and Deb Reynolds (26 years).



Meijer #57 members Thair Kassab (25 years) and Theresa Tolliver (26 years).



Meijer #311 members Ronald Hoogerhyde (44 years), Marion Smith (41 years), and Lucius Manning (36 years).



Members enjoy the Fredrick Meijer Gardens and Sculpture Park following their anniversary luncheon at the gardens. (Clockwise from top left) Members

Michael Cousinaw (37 years), Meijer #303, Kevin Magness (25 years), Meijer #50, and Tom Hafner (38 years), Meijer #50, in the sculpture park.

Meijer #312 members Sandra Bienick (41 years) and Karen Brant (39 years) in front of a garden waterfall.

Michael Gabris (46 years), Plumb's #677, and Richard Donohue (36 years), Plumb's #667, take a break next to a sculpture of Fred and Lena Meijer.

## Take Me Out to the Ball Game!

### Detroit Tigers



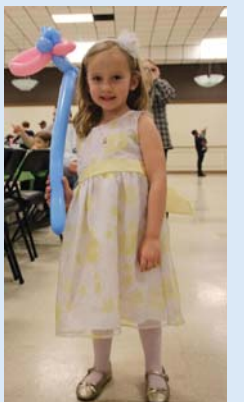
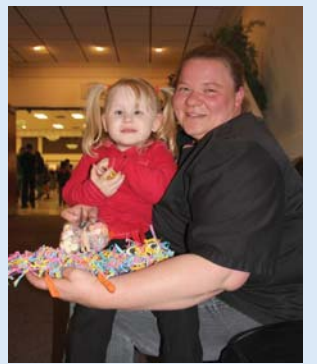
### West Michigan Whitecaps



UFCW 951 members enjoyed UFCW Day at both Comerica Park in Detroit and Fifth Third Ballpark in Grand Rapids, featuring all-you-can-eat picnics prior to the ballgames.

"I think it's great that the union covers some of the cost of these special events so members can enjoy an affordable time with family and friends," Shannon VanderPloeg, Meijer #36, who took her dad to both events, said.

## Members Have 'Egg-cellent' Time at Spring Celebration!



UFCW 951 members enjoyed food, crafts, and pictures with the Easter bunny at UFCW Michigan's annual Spring Celebration in Madison Heights.

## UFCW 951 Quarterly Membership Meetings

Meetings occur on different days for each region. Regions will rotate the day of the week they hold Quarterly Meetings. Membership meetings are one way you can ask questions, get involved and hear what's going on with your employer, your industry, and your Union! **All meetings begin at 7:00 p.m.**

### East

UFCW 951 Office  
30150 Telegraph Rd., 3rd floor  
Bingham Farms, MI 48025  
**July 16, 2012**

### Central

UFCW 951 Office  
3490 Belle Chase Way (lower level)  
Lansing, MI 48911  
**July 17, 2012**

### West

UFCW 951 Office  
3270 Evergreen Dr. NE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49525  
**July 18, 2012**

### North

All Seasons Resort  
760 S. Cedar Street  
Kalkaska, MI 49646  
**July 19, 2012**

## Reporting Meetings Follow up on Quarterly Meetings

At Reporting Meetings, you will hear reports on the topics discussed at the Quarterly Membership Meetings.

**All meetings begin at 7:00 p.m.**

### Brighton

Homewood Suites  
8060 Challis Rd.  
**July 24, 2012**

### Kalamazoo

Holiday Inn West  
2747 South 11th St.  
**July 24, 2012**

### Woodhaven

Holiday Inn Express  
21500 West Rd.  
**July 25, 2012**

### Birch Run

Best Western  
9087 East Birch Run Rd.  
**July 25, 2012**



## Benefit Golf Outing

**Sunday, July 22, 2012**  
**PohlCat Golf Course**  
**Mt. Pleasant, MI**  
**11 a.m.**

UFCW 951 members are invited to participate in this fundraiser for a special "members only" rate of \$85 per golfer (a \$115 savings).

The golf package includes 18 holes of golf, cart rental, souvenir gift, box lunch, entry into team and individual contests, door prizes and BBQ reception.

For more information or to register, contact Jackie Daugherty at 1.800.999.0951 ext 101.